



# 2-4 Months

**Your baby from two to four months**

Supporting your family during your baby's first year



2-4  
Months



**Healthy eating and active play are important for your baby.**

This booklet provides accurate, general information based on the latest scientific evidence for your baby's health in the first months and tips for parents' health too.

## RECOMMENDATIONS FOR YOUR BABY AT 2-4 MONTHS



### **Nutrition**

- Give only breastmilk (no other food, fluids or water) until your baby is 6 months old
- Breastmilk is the best food/drink for your baby's physical, mental and emotional development and has all the right water and nutrients your baby needs until around 6 months



### **Active play**

- Place your baby on his stomach (tummy time) for 10 - 15 minutes, 3 times each day. Make sure baby is awake, supervised and mostly happy.
- Play, talk, sing and tell stories with your baby.
- No screen-time for children under 2 years (time spent watching or using screens, such as TV, computers, tablets and phones)



### **Sleep**

- Baby will sleep for around 12 to 16 hours in total (including naps) during a 24-hour period.



### **Immunisation**

- At 4 months of age your baby should receive immunisations (vaccinations) to protect against some serious infectious diseases. Refer to your child's Personal Health Record (Blue Book) and talk to your Child and Family Health Nurse or Family Doctor.



## FEEDING YOUR BABY



### Continue exclusive breastfeeding

The World Health Organization recommends exclusive breastfeeding (giving only breastmilk) until your baby is 6 months old.

Water and other fluids or food will make baby full and reduce their hunger and this can interfere with your breastmilk supply. Breast milk is all baby needs until around 6 months.

#### Breastfeeding has many benefits for baby, including:

- strengthening the closeness/bonding between baby and parents/carers
- promoting healthy physical growth and brain development
- protecting from infections and sickness
- lowering the risk of food allergies

### Breastfeeding challenges and milk supply

Many mothers worry about their milk supply, but nearly all mothers do produce enough milk for their babies. The amount of milk a mother produces depends on how much and how frequently baby sucks at the breast. A mother's body will produce milk according to the demand.

#### What can I do to build up my supply?

- Breastfeed more often - at least 6, possibly up to 12 times in 24 hours
- Feed during the night. Frequent breastfeeding is important, including overnight.
- Check the positioning and attachment of your baby. A baby can suck more efficiently if correctly attached.
- Avoid giving bottle-feeds of anything except your breastmilk as these reduce your baby's appetite and his need to suck.

If you are experiencing any problems feeding, any breast or nipple pain or are concerned about your milk supply, talk to your local Child and Family Health Nurse (CFHN), Lactation Consultant or Family Doctor.

### Wait until your baby is around 6 months old before introducing foods

When your baby is around 6 months old, your baby will begin to show signs of being developmentally ready for food. **These signs may include:**

- holding their head up and sitting up without support
- they no longer poke out their tongue and push the food out of their mouth (this reflex prevents choking)
- showing an interest in food (with their eyes, gestures and sounds)

At around 3 to 4 months you may notice your baby start to dribble more, put their hands to their mouth, and seem interested about food. These are normal signs of starting to grow their teeth and discover their world. It does not mean they are ready for solids.

Breastmilk is the best food/drink for your baby and has all the right nutrients your baby needs until around 6 months.

Baby food products are widely advertised and expensive. Your baby does not need these. No foods or water are needed until baby is around 6 months old (unless you have been advised by a health professional).

## BABY FEED, PLAY AND SLEEP

As your baby grows, their feeding and sleeping also change, and you will get to learn their signals and know what they need.

Babies like to have a routine of feeding, playing and sleeping as this helps your baby feel safe and secure. It may help to do things in a similar order each day.



### FEED

- At 4 months babies may want to feed up to 6 - 8 times in 24 hours
- Feed whenever baby wants. Continue to respond to their feeding cues/signs (Refer to the Healthy Beginnings 0-2 Month booklet for feeding cues)
- As baby grows and becomes more efficient at sucking, feeds might become shorter in time and your breasts will adjust to these needs
- Start a feed with one breast. Feed until the breast is softer and lighter. If baby is still showing hunger cues/signs, then change to the other breast.

### Expressing breastmilk

There may be occasions, such as returning to work, when you need to express your breastmilk and then cup or bottle feed. You can express by using your hand, hand pumps or electric pumps. Talk to a Child and Family Health Nurse about how you can purchase or hire this equipment.

### How do I know that my baby is getting enough breastmilk?

#### Look for these signs:

##### Nappies

At least 5 heavy, clear-coloured wet nappies (on average over 24 hours)

Baby's poos are soft and yellow-mustard in colour

##### Growth

Baby is gaining weight, growth in-length and head circumference

##### Skin

Baby's skin colour looks healthy and the skin springs back when gently pressed

##### Alertness

Baby is alert and mostly happy when awake

##### Other signs

Your breasts feel softer and lighter after breastfeeding





## PLAY

**As your baby grows you will see them develop physically and mentally at different ages and stages.**

**At 2 - 4 months, developmental signs may include:**

- Sitting upright with hand support and better head control
- Pushing themselves up with their hands and rolling from their tummy to back
- Putting their hand in their mouth
- Beginning to creep and crawl
- Reaching out to grab things such as toys and watch out for your hair!
- Turning their head to sounds such as your voice



### **You are your baby's best teacher**

Play is the natural way that babies learn, and interaction with you is one of the best things you can do for their development. **At this age:**

- watch baby while awake on his stomach, 10 - 15 minutes, 3 times a day (Refer to Healthy Beginnings 0-2 Month booklet)
- tell stories, use soft books
- walk in the pram
- join a parent group or playground
- sing songs or nursery rhymes

It is best to avoid using screens with your baby, like TV or tablets. Other play activities are much better for baby's development and emotional health.



## SLEEP

- Even babies with lots of energy need time to rest. Follow your baby's cues/signs that say 'I'm tired', such as staring into the distance, yawning, crying and losing interest in people or toys.
- At around 4 months, babies may cry more, need more comfort, be difficult to settle or wake more often. This is a normal developmental stage.

### **Ideas for settling/calming baby**

- Gentle touching or stroking baby's head, leg or back
- Gentle and rhythmic patting on the mattress beside baby, or slowly rocking the cot
- Using a soothing, gentle voice to whisper or sing
- Cradling or holding baby firmly at their shoulder and hip (supporting their head) and gently rocking back and forth
- Wrapping baby gently but firmly, then place baby in their cot on their back
- Going for a walk in the pram or sling

For more information on settling, talk to your Child and Family Health Nurse, or visit [www.karitane.com.au](http://www.karitane.com.au)



## LOOKING AFTER MUM AND DAD

The transition to parenthood is a time of great change and is an opportunity to build a strong family. As new parents, make sure you take time to look after yourself and each other too, and do activities you enjoy.

### Looking after mum's emotional health

**Meeting the demands of being a mother can be challenging and overwhelming. Some ways to look after yourself include:**

- sharing the care: Asking family or friends to help with tasks such as laundry, cleaning, cooking or shopping.
- social interaction:
  - talking with friends and family
  - visiting your library or council to find out about groups in your area
  - meet other mums e.g. at the park, at language classes or online forums
- physical activity and nutrition:
  - aim for 20 - 30 minutes of physical activity per day, such as walking
  - eat a variety of foods from the 5 food groups
  - join the 'Get Healthy' service to help you with your healthy eating and physical activity goals. Free call 'Get Healthy' on 1300 806 258
- Mood and emotion: If you are not enjoying your usual activities or feeling sad talk to your Child and Family Health Nurse or Family Doctor.

### Developing dad's relationship with baby

Dad having a positive and involved relationship with baby can make a big difference to baby's early development, and later in life too. Mums and Dads often parent differently. These differences can help baby's development.

**Some ways that dad can build a strong relationship with baby include:**

- Singing, reading, and talking with baby
- Changing baby's nappies
- Calming / settling baby to sleep
- Taking care of baby so mum can have a break



## WHAT TO CONSIDER WHEN YOUR BABY IS 2 - 4 MONTHS

If you would like further information on the topics covered in this Healthy Beginnings booklet, you can use the following web-links and services.

### YOUR BABY'S HEALTH

### Useful links and services

#### Continue exclusive breastfeeding

Australian Breastfeeding Association

24-hour helpline 1800 686 268, [www.breastfeeding.asn.au](http://www.breastfeeding.asn.au)

#### Active play: supervised time on baby's stomach, play by reading, singing, talking

##### Raising Children Network

[www.raisingchildren.net.au/newborns/play-learning](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/newborns/play-learning)

Tresillian [www.tresillian.org.au](http://www.tresillian.org.au)

Karitane [www.karitane.com.au](http://www.karitane.com.au)

#### Immunisation

Talk to a Child and Family Health Nurse or Doctor

#### Sleep and settling

Baby cues/signs video guides [www.raisingchildren.net.au/newborns/behaviour/crying-colic/baby-cues](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/newborns/behaviour/crying-colic/baby-cues)

### YOUR HEALTH

### Useful links and services

#### Physical activity and healthy eating

'Get Healthy' coaching service 1300 806 258,

[www.gethealthynsw.com.au](http://www.gethealthynsw.com.au)

#### Emotional health and wellbeing for mum and dad

Beyondblue - 1300 224 636, [www.beyondblue.org.au](http://www.beyondblue.org.au)

Perinatal Anxiety & Depression Australia (PANDA) 1300 726 306 [www.panda.org.au](http://www.panda.org.au)

### SOCIAL SUPPORT

### Useful links and services

#### Connect with a Child and Family Health Nurse clinic

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/child-family-health-services](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/child-family-health-services)

#### Help with parenting

Resourcing parents NSW [www.resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au](http://www.resourcingparents.nsw.gov.au)

#### Join parent groups

Playgroups NSW [www.playgroupnsw.org.au/](http://www.playgroupnsw.org.au/)

#### Visit your local library or council to find out about local services

Libraries in NSW [www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services-public-libraries](http://www.sl.nsw.gov.au/public-library-services/services-public-libraries)

#### Connect with other mums

Talk to parenting forums, friends and family

### HOME, FAMILY AND WORK

### Useful links and services

#### Creating a safe environment for your baby

Kidsafe NSW [www.kidsafensw.org/](http://www.kidsafensw.org/)

#### Raising Children Network – for parents

[www.raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups](http://www.raisingchildren.net.au/grown-ups)

## Who is the Child and Family Health Nurse?

Child and family health nurses (CFHNs) are specialist registered nurses who provide free health checks for babies and children, aged 0 – 5 years. **They can talk with you and your family about:**

- Your child's health, growth, and development
- Feeding, sleeping, settling, playing and safety for your child
- You and your family's health
- Connecting you with community activities and other health services

To find your local CFHNs clinic, you can ask your Family Doctor or local library. You can also visit

[www.health.nsw.gov.au/child-family-health-services](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au/child-family-health-services)

This is a free service for children from birth to five years of age.

An interpreter can be arranged for your appointment.



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## Need an interpreter?

Call the free Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450. If you don't speak much English then say in English "Mandarin" and they will put you through to the right interpreter. Then ask them to phone the health service/number you need.

## FOR MORE SUPPORT AND INFORMATION, CONTACT

**HB**

### Healthy Beginnings

SLHD-HealthyBeginnings@health.nsw.gov.au  
[www.healthybeginnings.net.au](http://www.healthybeginnings.net.au)  
02 9515 9055

**HD**

### Health Direct Australia

[www.healthdirect.org.au](http://www.healthdirect.org.au)  
1800 022 222

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